

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 176286

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 176286

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEATS BEIRUT 6312 ACTION SECSTATE INFO CAIRO

DAMASCUS 16 JUL 76

QUOTE S E C R E T BEIRUT 6312

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: EVACUATION FROM LEBANON

REF: STATE 175248

1. RSO O'BRIEN THIS MORNING CONTACTED ABU JAAAFAR, PLO, CONCERNING PLO SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EVACUATION OF AMERICANS AND OTHERS FROM BEIRUT. ABU JAAAFAR GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY CONTACTED BY OTHER GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES BUT HE WAS OF COURSE AWARE OF THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE. HE AGREED TO COOPERATE TO FULLEST EXTENT AND, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH HIS MILITARY ADVISORS, EXPRESSED A STRONG PREFERENCE FOR AIR EVACUATION THROUGH BEIRUT AIRPORT. HE INDICATED THAT PLO COULD GUARANTEE SECURITY FOR THE EVACUATION FROM THE COLLECTION POINT TO THE AIRPORT AND AT THE AIRPORT. THE EMBOFF

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SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 176286

RAISED THE QUESTION OF AN INDIVIDUAL CRACKPOT WITH A MISSILE

OR OTHER WEAPON SHOOTING AT THE AIRCRAFT. ABU JAAFAR RE-EMPHASIZED THE PLO COULD HANDLE SECURITY PROVIDING WE COULD GET WORD TO THE CHRISTIAN SECTOR TO INSURE THAT THEY DID NOT FIRE DURING THE EXERCISE. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT PLO SEES APOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE AIRPORT AND WOULD LIKE TO UTILIZE OUR EVACUATION AS ONE STEP TOWARDS GETTING THE AIRPORT REOPENED.

2. ABU JAAFAR ALSO INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR A ROAD CONVOY. HE STATED THAT THEY COULD PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR BOTH THE AIRPORT AND ROAD CONVOY, IF WE WISHED TO UTILIZE BOTH METHODS, EITHER SIMULTANEOUSLY OR IN TANDEM. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN MANY CONVOYS AND THAT THE ROAD WAS SAFE AND THAT POSSIBLY BY TUESDAY OR WEDNESDAY OF NEXT WEEK, IT WOULD BE EVEN SAFER.

3. ABU JAAFAR SHOWED NO INTEREST IN THE UTILIZATION OF A BOAT FOR EVACUATION. WHILE HE DID NOT REFUSE TO SUPPORT THIS OPTION, IT WAS CLEAR THAT IT WAS NOT THEIR PREFERENCE.

4. THE ONE STIPULATION MADE WAS THAT THEY BE GIVEN A MINIMUM OF 48 HOURS NOTICE OF THE NUMBER AND NATIONALITY OF EVACUEES, AND METHOD FOR CONDUCTING THE EVACUATION. SINCE WE WILL NOT HAVE AN ACCURATE FIX ON THE NUMBER UNTIL NOON BEIRUT TIME SUNDAY, JULY 18, AFTER WHICH WASHINGTON WILL HAVE TO DETERMINE THE METHOD OF EVACUATION. THIS IS NOT ENOUGH TIME TO GIVE THE PLO 48 HOURS NOTICE AND STILL EVACUATE ON TUESDAY, JULY 20.

THEREFORE, STRONGLY URGE THAT THE DAY OF EVACUATION BE CHANGED TO WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, AT THE EARLIEST.

5. EMBASSY OFFICER CONTACTED MINISTER-COUNSELOR ABDEL LATIF AND REQUESTED EGYPTIAN EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN CONTACTING THE PLO. THEY AGREED TO DO SO IMMEDIATELY BUT ALSO INDICATED THAT THEY FELT WE WOULD NEED TO GIVE THE PLO SUFFICIENT TIME TO ARRANGE THE EVACUATION AFTER WE DECIDE THE MEANS. THE EGYPTIANS FELT THAT A DECISION ON SUNDAY WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO COMMUNICATE TO THE PLO SINCE THEY TEND TO BE UNAVAILABLE THAT DAY. THIS IS FURTHER JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGING THE EVACUATION TO WEDNESDAY, JULY 21. THE EGYPTIAN OFFICER STATED THAT, IN

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SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 176286

HIS OPINION, IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO USE AN EVACUATION OPTION WHICH COULD BE CARRIED OUT WITHIN AN AREA CONTROLLED BY THE PLO, I.E., SEA OR AIR FROM WEST BEIRUT. HE RECOGNIZED THAT CONVOYS HAD BEEN MOVING SAFELY BY LAND TO DAMASCUS BUT FELT THAT THERE WERE TOO MANY UNCONTROLLABLE ELEMENTS.

6. ACTION REQUESTED. REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENT AGREE SOONEST TO CHANGING THE DAY OF EVACUATION TO WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, OR THURSDAY,

JULY 22, AND THAT ALL FUTURE ANNOUNCEMENTS IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS,
VOA AND BBC BE ADJUSTED ACCORDINGLY.
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